

Hitler, Christianity, and the Third Reich



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THE PLACE OF CHRISTIANITY under National Socialism has been a matter of contention, as with all else connected with that philosophy. Hitler has been damned as the devil incarnate by his Christian opponents, and heralded as a Jesus-like messiah by his Christian proponents. The 24th point of the NSDAP's political programme even describes National Socialism as standing for "positive Christianity." In order to access the real relationship of Christianity to National Socialism it is necessary to go beyond the propaganda of both pro- and anti-National Socialist Christians. (ILLUSTRATION: Adolf Hitler)



To do this the private pronouncements of the National Socialist leaders must receive greater attention than their public statements. An additional consideration is the actual practice of the National Socialist regime towards the churches. Hitler's private conversations with his inner circle between 1941 and 1944, as recorded by Reichleiter Bormann, himself one of the National Socialist Party's most avid anti-Christians as we shall see, provide the most insightful of sources in determining the real attitude of Hitler towards Christianity.

Hitler commented on Minister of Religion Kerrl's effort to identify National Socialism with "positive Christianity," that it was "the noblest of intentions, but I don't believe the thing's possible, and I see the obstacle in Christianity itself." "As for the men close to me," he stated, "who, like me, have escaped from the clutches of dogma, I've no reason to fear that the church will get its hands on them. We'll see to it that the church cannot spread abroad teachings that conflict with the interests of the State. We shall continue to preach the doctrine of National Socialism, and the young will no longer be

taught anything but the truth. In the long run National Socialism and religion will no longer be able to exist together. The ideal solution would be to leave the religions to devour themselves, without persecutions. The dogma of Christianity gets worn away before the advances of science. Religion has to make more and more concessions. Gradually the myths crumble.”

EARLY VIEW



Hermann
Rauschning

During the first years of the regime, and just prior to it, Hermann Rauschning recorded Hitler’s conversations with his inner circle. According to Rauschning, a conservative in the ranks of the National Socialist party who became the president of Danzig, Hitler said of Christianity, “Leave the hair-splitting to others. Whether it’s the Old Testament or the New, or simply the sayings of Jesus, it’s all the same old Jewish swindle. It will not make us free. A German church, a German Christianity, is a distortion. One is either a German or a Christian. You cannot be both.... We don’t want people to keep one eye on the hereafter. We need free men who know that God is in themselves.”

Hitler made it clear that he was not interested in an “Aryanized Christianity” or the “Aryan Jesus” myth promoted by Houston Stewart Chamberlain, Von Liebenfels, and certain party members. “You cannot make an Aryan out of Jesus, that’s nonsense,” he stated. Rather, the festivals of the church, hijacked by Christianity from the heathens in the first place, would be re-heathenized. “Easter is no longer resurrection, but the eternal renewal of our people. Christmas is the birth of *our* saviour: the spirit of heroism and the freedom of our people.” If the priests put up resistance the regime would expose them before the people. “We shall brand them as ordinary criminals. I shall tear the mask of honesty off their faces. And if that is not enough, I shall make them appear ridiculous and contemptible. I shall order films to be made about them. We shall show the history of the monks on the cinema.”

Indeed, in 1937 a trial was held of 337 monks, “for abusing pupils or patients” committed to their care. A few monks escaped with millions of marks of German money, while the vast majority were imprisoned. The English ex-monk Joseph McCabe commented that they went to court “on the vilest of charges.” Of a chaplain named Father Leogivill, he said: “Once

when he was on night duty he raped a sick youth of 17 who was asleep in the ward, and could not defend himself because his right arm was in a sling.” This situation was not unique, nor is it today uncommon. What is unique are the effective measures the Third Reich took.

FOLK RELIGION

A folk religion would arise that would replace Christianity. “The peasant will be told what the church has destroyed for him: the whole of the secret knowledge of nature, of the divine, the shapeless, the daemonic. The peasant shall learn to hate the church on that basis. Gradually he shall be taught by what wiles the soul of the German people has been raped. We shall wash off the Christian veneer and bring out a religion peculiar to our race. And this is where we must begin, not in the big cities.....”

Rauschning remarks in his *Hitler Speaks* that the old folks customs were being used by the regime to de-Christianize the peasantry. Agriculture Minister Walter Darre, the original proponent of the famous *Blood and Soil* doctrine and the real father of the “Green Movement,” was one of the regime’s most avid anti-Christians. Agricultural exhibitions had themes of the old peasant revolts against the church. Peasant calendars were produced which replaced Christian festivals with Germanic heathen ones.

COMMUNISM AND CHRISTIANITY: REVOLTS AGAINST NATURE

The very doctrines of National Socialism and Christianity are antithetical. Christianity was held to be the forerunner of Bolshevism, and both were revolts against Nature herself, with the Jews to be behind each. Bormann records Hitler as stating: “Christianity is a religion against natural law, a protest against nature. Taken to its logical extreme, Christianity would mean the systematic cultivation of the human failure.” “Pure Christianity — the Christianity of the catacombs — is concerned with translating the Christian doctrine into fact. It leads quite simply to the annihilation of mankind. It is merely wholehearted Bolshevism under a tinsel of metaphysics.”



“The heaviest blow that ever struck humanity was the coming of Christianity.

Martin Bormann

Bolshevism is Christianity’s illegitimate child.... The deliberate lie in the matter of religion was introduced into the world by Christianity. Bolshevism practices a lie of the same nature when it claims to bring liberation to mankind. In the ancient world the relations between men and Gods were founded on an instinctive respect. It was a world enlightened by the idea of tolerance. Christianity was the first creed in the world to exterminate its adversaries in the name of love. Its keynote is intolerance.”

THE POX OF CHRISTIANITY

Hitler’s analysis of Christianity is Nietzschean: “The reason why the ancient world was so pure, light and serene was that it knew nothing of the two great scourges: the pox and Christianity.” “Christianity is a prototype of Bolshevism: the mobilization by the Jews of the masses of slaves with the object of undermining society. Thus one understands that the healthy elements of the Roman world were proof against the doctrine. Yet Rome (i.e. Fascist Italy) allows itself today to reproach Bolshevism with having destroyed the churches. As if Christianity itself hadn’t behaved in the same way towards the pagan temples.”

THE DEPLORABLE BIBLE

“It is deplorable that the Bible should have been translated into German, and the whole of the German people should have thus become exposed to the whole of this Jewish mumbo-jumbo. As a sane German, one is flabbergasted to think that the German folk could have led themselves to such a pass by Jewish filth and priestly twaddle.”

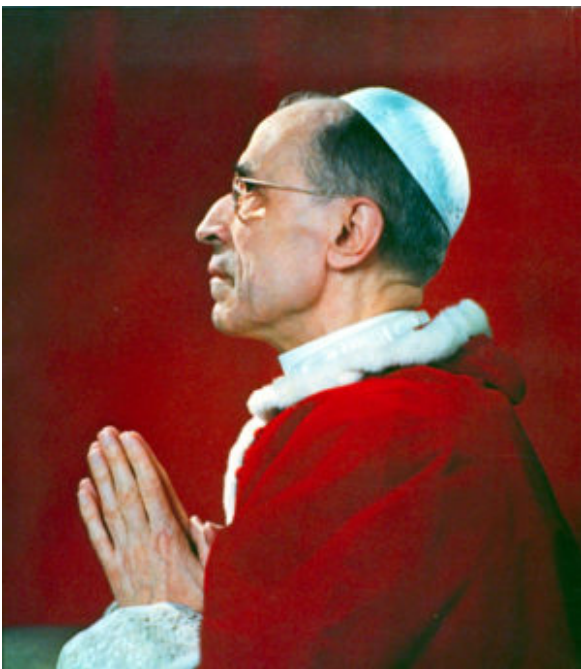
PRIESTS

“What a happy inspiration to have kept the clergy out of the party. On 21 March 1933 at Potsdam, the question was raised: with the Church or without the Church? I conquered the State despite the malediction pronounced on us by both creeds [i.e. Catholic and Protestant]. On that day, we went to the tomb of the kings, whilst the others were attending religious services. Suppose that at that period I’d made a pact with the churches, I’d today be sharing the lot of the Duce [Mussolini]. By nature the Duce is a free thinker, but he decided to choose the path of concessions. For my part, in his place I’d have decided to choose the path of revolution. I’d have entered the Vatican and thrown everybody out.”

As with many other matters, Hitler intended postponing a final reckoning with the priests until after the war. “The evil that’s gnawing at our vitals is our priests, of both creeds. After the war, I’ll take the necessary steps to make the recruiting of priests extraordinarily difficult. In particular, I’ll no longer allow children from the age of 10 upward, to devote their lives to the church when they’ve absolutely no notion what they’re undertaking — in accepting celibacy for example.”

CHURCH AND STATE

Political interference from the clergy was not tolerated. Hitler stated: “If one once allows the church to exercise the slightest influence on the governing of the people and the upbringing of the younger generation, it will strive to become omnipotent, and one makes a great mistake if one thinks that one can make a collaborator of the church by accepting compromise.” From the earliest days of the regime, the National Socialists had come into conflict with the churches. The 1933 sterilization law of the congenitally retarded was particularly offensive to the Catholic Church, with its doctrine of the sanctity of all human life, in contradistinction to the eugenic outlook of the National Socialists. In 1937 Pius XI accused the regime of “secret and open fundamental hostility to Christ and his church.” Towards the end, in 1945, Pope Pius XII described National Socialism as, “the arrogant apostasy from Jesus Christ, the denial of his doctrine and of his work of redemption, the cult of violence, the idolatry of race and blood, the overthrow of human liberty and dignity.”



Pope Pius XII

One point of irritation to Hitler was that while the churches had declared themselves enemies of the German State, the people were expected to subsidize them. Subsidies were actually extracted from the wage packet much like union levies, and to contract out meant to endure considerable antagonism. This paradox was never resolved. Hitler commented that, “Once we cease handing out millions of marks a year to the church, the damn parsons will very quickly change their tune and, instead of having the impudence to revile us and to attack us in the most shameful manner, will very soon be eating out of our hands. Once the war is over I will put a swift end to the

Concodat [diplomatic agreement between the State and the Vatican]. It will give me the greatest personal pleasure to point out to the Church all those occasions on which it has broken the terms of it. One need only recall the close co-operation between the Church and the murderers of Heydrich [Security Chief].” “Catholic priests not only allowed them to hide in a church, but even allowed them to entrench themselves in the sanctuary of the altar.”

“I don’t interfere with matters of belief, therefore I can’t allow churchmen to interfere with temporal affairs. The organized lie must be smashed. The State must remain the absolute master.”

“When I was younger, I thought it was necessary to set about matters with dynamite. I’ve since recognized there’s room for a little subtlety. The rotten branch falls of itself. The final state must be: in St. Peter’s chair, a senile officiate; facing him, a few old women, as gaga and as poor in spirit as anyone could be. The young and healthy are on our side. Against a church that identifies itself with the State, as in England, I have nothing to say. But even so, it’s impossible to hold humanity eternally in bondage to lies. After all, it was only between the 6th and 8th centuries that Christianity was imposed on our people by princes who had an alliance of interest with the shavelings. Our people had previously succeeded in living all right without this religion. I have six divisions of the SS composed of men absolutely indifferent in matters of religion. It doesn’t prevent them going to their deaths with serenity in their souls.”

“That the Fascists were spared a second civil war is due to the fact that the movement succeeded in uniting the Italian nation in spite of the opposition from the church. Further, Fascism clearly defined the position as regards what things fell within the sphere of the church and what things fell within the sphere of the State. When the church refused to recognize the law for the formation of the Fascist Youth Organization, the Fascists retaliated by ruthlessly breaking up every religious procession from Rome to the south of Italy. The result was that within three days the church had come to heel.”

JOY OF LIFE

The heathen character of National Socialism was contrasted to the otherworldly preoccupation of the church. Hitler states: “To deserve its place in history our people must be above all a people of warriors. This implies both privileges and obligations, the obligation of submitting to a most vigorous upbringing and the privilege of the healthy enjoyment of life. If a German soldier is expected to be ready to sacrifice his life with demur, then he is entitled to love freely and without restriction. In life, love and

battle go hand in hand, and the inhibited little bourgeois must be content with the crumbs which remain. But if the warrior is to be kept in fighting trim, he must not be pestered with religious precepts which ordain abstinence of the flesh. A healthy-minded man simply smiles when a Saint of the Church like St. Anthony bids him eschew the greatest joy that life has to give, and offers him the solace of self-mortification and castigation in its place.”

HIMMLER AND THE SS

The SS epitomizes the contradistinction between Christianity and the philosophy of the Third Reich. It was a Black Order in its own right, and Himmler envisaged the creation of an autonomous SS State which would be an example to the world of National Socialism. In 1937 Himmler instructed his chiefs to plan a counter-culture to replace Christianity, and it was declared, “the age of the final showdown with Christianity” had dawned, and one of the objectives of the SS was to provide Germans with “the proper ideological foundation” to replace it.

An SS porcelain factory manufactured pagan cult objects to replace Christian symbols. The Summer and Winter Solstices were revived to replace Christian festivals. There were SS birth and marriage ceremonies of heathen character. The underlying conception behind such ceremonies was the SS perspective of birth and marriage as aspects of an eternal cycle of life and death. Himmler’s right-hand man, Heydrich, Reich Security chief, declared of Christianity and heathenism: “Who is there among us who does not, deep in his heart, provided he can still think with his blood, have a profound, strangely haunting sense of shame, when, walking through the countryside, before the panorama perhaps of snow-covered Alpine mountain tops or in the midst of a somber Westphalian heath, comes across an image of the crucified Jesus? The Gods of our ancestors looked different; they were men, and each had a weapon in his hand, symbolizing the attitude to life that is inherent in our race: that of action, that of a man’s responsibility to himself. How different the pale crucified one, expressing — by his decided look of suffering, humility and extreme surrender — qualities which contradict the fundamental heroic attitude of our race.”

Himmler’s idea of God was a major influence on SS philosophy. This *Got* was spelled with only one ‘t’ in archaic German, to distinguish it from the Christian “*Gott*.” At an SS birth ceremony it was declared: “From *Got* your knowledge, your tasks, your life-purpose, all life’s perceptions flow. Each who drink from this tankard be witness to the fact that you are *Got*-united.” SS newlyweds were betrothed before the SS Wedding Altar and presented with a wooden bread dish by Himmler. This

bore the carved legend: “Be worthy of the bread of your soil, then your kin will live forever.” Himmler, in his 1935 publication *The SS as an Anti-Bolshevik Battle Organization*, rejected atheism and propounded a belief in a god or first principle responsible for cosmic ordering of “this whole earth, the entire plant and animal world.” Amongst his trusted aides he referred to this god as Uralten — “the original or ancient one,” an old Germanic conception. Christianity had placed women in a position of subjection to enforce their destruction. The priesthood was seen as a homoerotic and even homosexual institution, anti-woman by its nature.



Heinrich Himmler

“The whole tenor of the priesthood and the whole of Christianity [was that of] an erotic male fraternity for the formation and maintenance of this Bolshevism.” “I have the conviction that the Roman emperors, who exterminated the first Christians, did precisely what we are doing with the communists. These Christians were at the time the vilest scum, which the city accommodated, the vilest Jewish people, the vilest Bolsheviks there were. The Bolshevism at that time had the power to grow large on the dying body of Rome. The priesthood of this Christian church, which later in unending battle subjugated the Aryan Church, was engaged from the fourth to the fifth century in demanding the celibacy of the priesthood. They based themselves on St. Paul and the original apostles who presented the woman as something sinful and tolerated or recommended marriage as a legal way out of whoredom — that is in the Bible — and represented the procreation of children as a ‘necessary evil’. This priesthood pursued this path consistently through those centuries until in the year 1139 the celibacy of priests was put into effect. Further, I have the conviction that merely for the few who do not wish to reconcile themselves to this homosexuality — especially for the parish priests who in my estimation are to an overwhelming extent over 50% not homosexual, while I assume that in the monasteries homosexuality amounts to 90-95-100% — there is a way out created for them to procure the necessary women and females in the oral confession box.”

Himmler hoped that within a few years judicial proceedings would show the church leadership up as a homosexual fraternity which “has been terrorizing people for 1800 years, claiming from them the greatest blood sacrifices, sadistically perverse in its manifestations.” As we have seen,

several years later, the judicial system did begin to address this matter with the trial of monks for molestation. Himmler emphasized the anti-woman nature of the Medieval witch and heresy trials. It is an interesting sidelight that he expected particular attention to be paid to interaction between his SS men and young women socially, to combat the “exaggerated masculinizing” of society.

Addressing SS at Posen in 1942 on their numerous tasks, Himmler zeroed in on Christianity, saying that it would have to be dealt with more vigorously than hitherto. “This Christendom, this greatest pestilence which could have befallen us in history, which has weakened us for every conflict, we must finish with.” Himmler attacked the Christian idea of Man as above or apart from Nature, and explained his cyclic conception of Eternity, that Man must be anchored in his ancestors and in his grandchildren.

MARTIN BORMANN ON CHRISTIANITY

Martin Bormann, who became Hitler’s secretary and deputy after Hess’ abortive peace mission to England, like Himmler, Rosenberg, Heydrich, Hitler and most of the others at the top of the Reich hierarchy, also had a clear perspective on Christianity. The following is taken from *Kirchliches Jahrbuch fur die evangelische Kirche in Deutschland*: “National Socialist and Christian concepts are incompatible. The Christian churches build upon the ignorance of the men and strive to keep large portions of the people in ignorance because only in this way can the Christian churches maintain their power. On the other hand, National Socialism is based on scientific foundations. Christianity’s immutable principles, which were laid down almost two thousand years ago by Jews, have increasingly stiffened into life-alien dogmas. National Socialism however, if it wants to fulfill its task further, must always guide itself according to the newest data of scientific researchers.”

“When in the future our youth no longer hear anything about this Christianity, whose doctrine is far below our own, Christianity will automatically disappear.” “When we National Socialists speak of God, by God we do not understand, as do naive Christians and their clerical beneficiaries, a manlike being who is sitting around in some corner of the spheres. Rather, we must open the eyes of mankind to the fact that in addition to our unimportant earth there exist countless other bodies in the universe, many of them surrounded, like the sun, by smaller bodies, the moons. The force which moves all those bodies in the universe, in accordance with Natural Law, is what we call the Eternal, the Allfather or God. The assertion that this world- force can worry about the fate of every individual, every bacillus on earth, and that it can be influenced by so-

called prayer or other astonishing things, is based either on a suitable dose of naiveté or on outright commercial effrontery.”

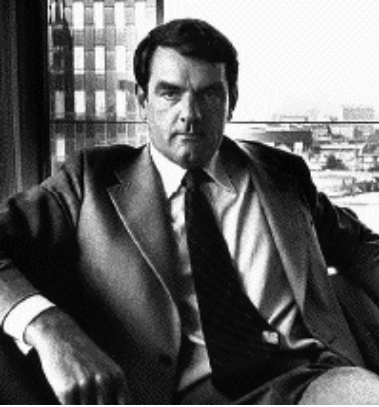
“In contrast, we National Socialists call upon ourselves to live as naturally as possible — that is, in keeping with the Laws of Life. The more thoroughly we know and attend to the Laws of Nature and Life, the more we adhere to them, the more do we correspond to the will of the Eternal; the deeper our insight into the will of the Eternal, the greater will be our success.” “It follows from the incompatibility of National Socialist and Christian concepts that we must oppose any strengthening of existing Christian denominations and must refuse to give them any assistance. We can make no differentiation between the various Christian confessions. Any strengthening of the Christian concepts would merely work against us.”

“To an ever-increasing degree the Folk must be wrested from Christianity and their agents, the pastors. Obviously, the Christians, from their standpoint, will and must defend themselves against this loss of power. But never again must Christianity regain an influence in the leadership of our folk. This must absolutely and finally be broken.”

CHRISTIANITY IN THE THIRD REICH

Despite the pragmatic and relatively cautious approach the times required, the regime did begin preliminary measures against Christianity. One means was to heathenize the churches from within. A National-Socialist-oriented German Christian Faith Movement was formed in opposition to the mainline Protestant churches. Hundreds of pastors of the Confessional Church were arrested in 1937. Catholics were removed from the Civil Service. In 1937 over 100,000 Germans formally left the Catholic Church. According to the reliable British historian David Irving (*The War Path*), “The Nazis discouraged Catholic education in schools, the convents and monasteries were dissolved and their property confiscated, and the Jesuits were driven out of influence everywhere.” The Hitler Youth sung such verses as, “I am neither Christian nor Catholic, I am for the SA through thin and thick.”

Something of what the regime had in mind for eventually replacing Christianity with after the war can be deduced from the proposals drawn up in 1942 for the creation of a National Reich Church by leading National Socialist philosopher Alfred Rosenberg. Indeed his own magnum opus *The Myth of the Twentieth Century* had met such condemnation by the churches since its first publication in 1930. Among the points for a Reich Church were: “13. The National Church demands immediate cessation of the publishing and dissemination of the Bible in Germany.” “14. The



David Irving

Führer's *Mein Kampf* is the greatest of all documents.....embodies the purest and truest ethics for the present and future life of our nation.” “18. The National Church will clear away from its altars all crucifixes, Bibles and pictures of the saints.” “19. On the altars there must be nothing but *Mein Kampf* and to the left on the altar a sword.” “30. On the day of its foundation the Christian cross must be removed from all churches, cathedrals and chapels, and it must be superseded by the Swastika.”

The priesthoods were to be replaced by orators. Also see The German Religion — *Deutsche Glaubensbewegung* — (German Faith Movement): Three years after Adolf Hitler assumed the seat of power in Germany, in 1936 the National Reich Church was established, and in it only national orators of the Reich were allowed to speak. Reich Church Bishop Ludwig Müller: “The National Reich Church demands an immediate stop to the printing and sale of the Bible in Germany. The National Reich Church will remove from the altars of all churches the Bible, the cross, and religious objects. Mercy is an un-German conception. The word mercy is one of the numerous terms of the Bible with which we can have nothing to do. On the altars there must be nothing but *My Struggle* (*Mein Kampf*), and to the left of this a sword.”



Alfred Rosenberg

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